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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; May 28, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo, JoongAng Ilbo, Segye Ilbo, All TVs
[1](#)N. Korea Declares "End to Korean War Armistice;"
Warns of "Military Action"

Dong-a Ilbo, Hankook Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun
[1](#)N. Korea: "We Can No Longer Guarantee Safety of Vessels
in the Waters West of the Peninsula"

Hankyoreh Shinmun
Grief over Former President Roh's Death Reaching Fever Pitch

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

The ROK military has been placed on high alert following North Korea's May 27 warnings that it is no longer bound by the 1953 Korean War Armistice and "will immediately respond with a powerful military strike to any hostile act against our peaceful vessels." North Korea also warned that it can no longer guarantee the safety of ROK and U.S. military vessels as well as civilian ships in the waters west of the peninsula. (All)

This North Korean move apparently came in retaliation for Seoul's decision to participate fully in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which aims to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction. (All)

In the aftermath of North Korea's second nuclear test, there are growing calls in ROK political circles to delay the 2012 transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) from the U.S. to the ROK and to "restore the nation's nuclear sovereignty." (Chosun, Dong-a, Hankook, Segye)

In a related development, the ruling Grand National Party (GNP) asked the ROKG yesterday to reconsider the (timing of the) wartime control transfer in 2012. (All) Ruling GNP Chairman Park Hee-tae was quoted as saying: "It is time for the ROK to be in close contact with the U.S. to discuss specifics of the U.S. pledge for a nuclear umbrella." (Chosun, JoongAng, Dong-a, Hankyoreh, Segye, Seoul)

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

North Korea has launched five short-range missiles since its underground nuclear test on May 25, further heightening tensions on the Korean Peninsula and across the region. (All)

Analysts viewed these launches as aimed at deterring ROK and U.S. reconnaissance planes from approaching the North to verify its claimed nuclear test. (All)

Hard-line opinions against North Korea are gaining momentum in Washington, with U.S. experts on the Korean Peninsula - conservatives and progressives alike - calling for a resolute and effective response at the international level, without being dragged along by North Korea. (Chosun)

In a related development, the Obama Administration is reportedly considering re-listing North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism, as well as imposing further financial sanctions against the North. (All)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-North Korea

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Most ROK media carried inside-page reports that the five permanent UN Security Council (UNSC) members and the ROK and Japan have begun discussions on possibilities for a new resolution against North Korea.

Moderate Hankook Ilbo and KBS TV quoted a source at the UN: "It is unlikely a decision will come within the week, because there is no progress in detailed talks due to China's undecided stance."

Most ROK media replayed foreign media reports that the Obama Administration is considering re-listing North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism, as well as imposing further financial sanctions against the North. Moderate Hankook Ilbo headlined its story: "U.S. Seeks Independent Sanctions on North Korea"

Noting North Korea's launches of five short-range missiles since its underground nuclear test on May 25, most ROK media cited analysts as viewing the launches as aimed at deterring ROK and U.S. reconnaissance planes from approaching the North to verify its claimed nuclear test.

The ROK media gave top front-and inside-page play to North Korea's May 27 warnings of military action against the ROK following Seoul's decision to participate fully in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which aims to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

The ROK media widely cited the North's May 27 statement issued by its military mission to the joint security area in the truce village of Panmunjeom: "Our military is no longer bound by the 1953 Korean War Armistice. Our revolutionary forces will consider the (ROK's) full participation in PSI a 'declaration war' and will immediately respond with a powerful military strike to any hostile act against our peaceful vessels including search and seizure." The North also said that it can no longer guarantee the safety of ROK and U.S. military vessels as well as civilian ships in the waters west of the peninsula, according to media reports.

Conservative Chosun Ilbo viewed the waters near the Northern Limit Line (NLL), the de facto maritime border in the Yellow Sea, as the most likely place where North Korea could carry out provocations. In an editorial entitled "North Korea's Threats and Provocations Reach Dangerous Level," Chosun Ilbo commented: "Given that North Korea has continuously created tensions with its unpredictable

brinkmanship tactics and provocations, no one can be sure when the North will put their threats into action."

Most ROK media reported that there are growing calls in ROK political circles to delay the 2012 transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) from the U.S. to the ROK and to "restore the nation's nuclear sovereignty," in the aftermath of North Korea's second nuclear test.

According to media reports, the ruling GNP asked the ROKG yesterday to reconsider the (timing of the) wartime control transfer in 2012, and its Chairman Park Hee-tae said yesterday: "It is time for the ROK to be in close contact with the U.S. to discuss specifics of the U.S. pledge for a nuclear umbrella," while stressing the importance of "making our own efforts to obtain a sufficient deterrent against North Korea's nuclear weapons."

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo editorialized: "North Korea announced that 2012 will be (the year) when it achieves its goal of becoming a 'powerful country.' Based on this statement, some (ROK) military observers predict that the North (intends to) become a nuclear weapons state by that year. This forecast may have seemed too far-fetched (before) but it isn't any longer after this week's nuclear test. This means that our security could be in jeopardy if this crucial change (the transfer of wartime control) is made in the combined forces under the circumstances. We hope that President Lee Myung-bak will ask the U.S. to delay the transfer (of OPCON) at the upcoming ROK-U.S. summit scheduled for June 16. If the U.S. accepts, then the ROK can quell fears stirred up by the nuclear test

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and focus on economic recovery."

OPINIONS/EDITORIALS

LESSONS FROM A FORMER AMBASSADOR'S REGRETS
(Chosun Ilbo, May 26, 2009, Page 30)

By Washington Correspondent Lee Ha-won

Memoirs reveal the truth of history, it is said. The memoirs recently published by senior American officials who served in South Korea in the early 2000s are important in that context.

Thomas Hubbard, the American Ambassador in Seoul (who took office in) 2001, when South Korea began to turn left, regrets the 2002 accident when two Korean schoolgirls were crushed to death under the wheels of a U.S. armored vehicle. He most seriously regrets that he didn't forcefully push President George W. Bush to make an apology, Hubbard disclosed in "Ambassadors' Memoir," published by the Korea Economic Institute. The deaths of the two Korean schoolgirls, mishandled by the U.S., affected the 2002 South Korean presidential election, he added.

Second Infantry Division Commander General Russel Honore, who served in Korea at that time and who now works as a disaster specialist, also refers to the accident in a memoir titled "Survival." He said he let a young major be the face and voice of the Second Infantry Division's response to the tragedy. You should be in the apologizing mode. My young public affairs officer was in the explaining mode," he recalled. "He sent the wrong message to the Korean people which played into the hands of the anti-American minority party and the results were riots and demonstrations throughout the country. By the time I realized my mistake it was too late to make amends."

No life is free from regret. Humans are bound to make one mistake after another. But the regrets expressed by a former American Ambassador in Seoul and a senior U.S. Forces Korea Commander, who influenced Korean Peninsula policy, are not the same as those of ordinary people.

When the 2002 accident happened, the American officials concerned thought they made a rational decision. They attached importance to

the legal aspect that the tragedy occurred due to the restricted vision of an armored vehicle on training conducted for the security of South Korea. They paid greater attention to rationalizing the situation at the time, rather than (considering the) possible repercussions of the accident. It didn't take long for them to realize that their response was foolish rather than immature.

The Barack Obama Administration's recent North Korea policy reminds me of that situation. The Obama Administration says North Korea is missing the opportunity even as Washington is promoting reconciliation with Cuba, Iran and Syria, breaking with the Bush Administration's policy. It rationalizes the fact that it has moved North Korea down its list of priorities since it alone has failed to respond to offers of dialogue.

There can be no objection to the view that the North continues to make misjudgments. The strategy of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il to carry out a second nuclear test warrants world condemnation.

But we should reconsider the (policy) of leaving the North Korean issue behind and watching the North take self-destructive action. We need to keep in mind that the Bush administration's policy of neglect (towards North Korea) prompted the North to carry out the first nuclear test in 2006.

The Obama Administration's foreign affairs and security policy makers will write their own memoirs before long. I hope they will have no regrets about the way they handled North Korea in 2009. Imagine a scenario where Pyongyang threatens the entire world with

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an intercontinental ballistic missile fitted with a nuclear warhead: it's high time that we found a breakthrough.

(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

DELAY WARTIME CONTROL TRANSFER
(JoongAng Ilbo, May 28, 2009, Page 38)

Should South Korea reconsider taking back wartime operational control of its forces from the United States now that North Korea has conducted its second nuclear test? The transfer of wartime command is scheduled for 2012, and some people are voicing concern. With tensions building on the Korean Peninsula, the strength of the Korea-U.S. combined forces should not be compromised in any way, they argue. And the transition from U.S. to South Korean control runs the risk of, at some juncture, weakening defenses.

We agree with this perspective, but we oppose entirely halting the transfer of wartime operational control, which has already made sizable progress. The problem is the deadline for transfer: 2012. South Korea is at fault for setting such a close date and we highly recommend that the South Korean government rush to discuss the timing again with the United States.

Also, 2012 will be a busy year for both countries. The South and the U.S. are set to have presidential elections that year, and neither country wants to see the essential elements of the Korea-United States alliance changed at such a crucial time. We need everyone to have their eyes on the transfer when it eventually goes ahead, and nobody wants any distractions. The plan is also on shaky ground because people are worried that the initial deal was established in the wrong atmosphere. Some feel that the decision to take back operational command was taken without sufficient confidence or understanding by the administration of the late President Roh Moo-hyun. The transfer emerged as an issue between the two allies in early 2003. Roh came up with the idea of making national defense more self-reliant. From that time on, both countries have harbored different views on a range of security issues and Korea-U.S. ties subsequently deteriorated to the lowest levels in history throughout Roh's term. This mood has made an immense impact on discussions concerning taking back wartime operational control. For example, while Korea wanted the year to be 2015, the U.S. proposed 2009, displaying its displeasure with the

South Korean government. That mood, say some Korean government officials, still remains among U.S. defense officials. Then, early this year, North Korea announced that 2012 will be (the year) when it achieves its goal of becoming a 'powerful country.' Based on this statement, some (ROK) military observers predict that the North (intends to) become a nuclear weapons state by that year. This forecast may have seemed too far-fetched (before) but it isn't any longer after this week's nuclear test. This means that our security could be in jeopardy if this crucial change (the transfer of wartime control) is made in the combined forces under the circumstances.

We hope that President Lee Myung-bak will ask the U.S. to delay the transfer (of OPCOM) at the upcoming ROK-U.S. summit scheduled for June 16. If the U.S. accepts, then the ROK can quell fears stirred up by the nuclear test and focus on economic recovery.

(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

NORTH KOREA'S THREATS AND PROVOCATIONS REACH DANGEROUS LEVEL
(Chosun Ilbo, May 28, 2009, Page 27)

North Korea's permanent military mission to the joint security area in the demilitarized zone in a statement Wednesday said it cannot guarantee the legal status of the five islands (Baekryeong, Yeonpyeong, Daechong, Socheong and Udo islands) in the West Sea controlled by the South in the North's territorial waters and safe

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passage of U.S. and South Korean ships.

This was the first North Korean response after South Korea on Tuesday joined the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative, which aims to stem trafficking of weapons of mass destruction. North Korea's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland said it would deem South Korea's full participation in the PSI as a "declaration of war" and vowed to "counter them with prompt and strong military strikes."

The North Korean military says South Korea's membership in the PSI is a violation of the armistice agreement that ended the 1950-53 Korean War. The North claims the armistice prohibits maritime blockades, and therefore Pyongyang is now also no longer bound by the agreement. But even when the armistice was signed, the clause on the prohibition of maritime blockades stipulates that such moves will be banned only when the Allied Forces gain full control of the airspace and maritime space on the Korean peninsula, including North Korea, and a ceasefire is established.

The PSI takes into consideration the domestic laws of the participating countries, as well as international laws and the decisions of the UN Security Council. South Korean authorities cannot search North Korean vessels outside the South's territorial waters. So it is nonsense to claim that the activities of the PSI constitute a "maritime blockade." But regardless of the validity of North Korea's claim, given that North Korea has continuously created tensions with its unpredictable brinkmanship tactics and provocations, no one can be sure when the North will put their threats into action.

A naval battle in 1999 lasted 14 minutes, and another one in 2002 18 minutes. North Korea has been firing short-range missiles in exercises on its western and eastern coasts, and there is no telling when it will lob surface-to-ship or ship-to-ship missiles at our naval vessels. If North Korea resorts to military provocation, it could be limited to a single area or it could happen simultaneously in several locations. It would be too late to look for a response after the provocations take place. Front-line military commanders must prepare for a wide range of North Korean provocations and come up with specific responses.

Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee told the National Assembly on Feb. 20 that North Korean missile launchers must be attacked if they fire at South Korean targets. If this happens, we cannot rule out the

possibility of an escalating military confrontation. So we need to come up with responses for each scenario and each stage. We must be able quickly defeat North Korean provocation so they do not seriously threaten the security of this nation.

The best way to deal with North Korean military provocation is to prepare responses at the government level rather than entrusting the military with the task. This is because if a military clash takes place, it is necessary to consider the safety of workers in the Kaesong Industrial Complex and other variables as well as military responses. The best option is to prevent such acts of provocation from happening in the first place. The most important factor is a firm military posture, based on the South Korea-U.S. alliance, to deal with any threats by North Korea.

(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

KOREAN MILITARY TENSION RISES
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, May 28, 2009, Page 23)

Military tensions between North Korea and South Korea are rising. In statements announced yesterday, North Korea's military mission to Panmunjeom and the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland called once again the South Korean government's declaration of full-scale participation in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) a "declaration of war." They also announced that the 1953 Armistice Agreement is no longer

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binding. The possibility that North Korea will go beyond making mere verbal threats towards provoking an actual military clash has grown. North Korea's statement that it would react to "even the slightest hostile act" with immediate and powerful military strikes shows their disapproval of South Korea's full participation in PSI. North Korea has gone further to claim that participation in PSI is a clear denial of both international law and the Armistice Agreement, which forbids the placing of a blockade of any kind against the other side. As a form of response, North Korea has warned it will not guarantee the legal status of five islands (Baengnyeong-do, Daecheong-do, Socheong-do, Yeonpyeong-do and U-do) in the "disputed maritime demarcation zone" (Yellow Sea) or safe passage of U.S. and South Korean naval ships or civilian shipping vessels in neighboring waters.

North Korea had already issued warnings twice this year that it would consider South Korea's full participation in PSI a declaration of war. The previous warnings were communicated through a conversation with a Spokesman from the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland (Jo Pyeong Tong or the North Korean Workers' Party organization responsible for dealings with South Korea) on March 30 and a Q&A session with a chairman of North Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff on April 18. This time, however, the specific announcement was made through the North Korean Mission to Panmunjeom that deals with the Armistice Agreement and differs in both quality and intensity (from the earlier warnings.) In particular, it hints that aside from the Yellow Sea, where there have been intermittent armed clashes, a clash could take place on land, too.

If North Korea's warnings turn into actual provocations, it is clear that inter-Korean relations, which have been steadily deteriorating, will race towards the bottom. This situation helps neither North Korea nor South Korea. Neither side can gain anything by instigating an armed clash. In particular, if North Korea provokes a clash first, it would be the same as inviting international isolation on itself.

The Lee Myung-bak Administration bears a great deal of responsibility for the current situation. One might say it was necessary for the government to find a way to respond to North Korea's second nuclear test, but participating fully in PSI has nothing to do with finding a solution to the nuclear issue. In

fact, North Korea's reaction to the decision is just one example of how inter-Korean relations have worsened and how South Korea's ability to resolve the nuclear issue has weakened. If the government says that its immediate goal is to stop North Korea from developing nuclear weapons and to bring peace and stability to the Korean Peninsula, it must devote more effort in (devising) a strategic approach to bring North Korea back to the negotiating table.

(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

ROKG SHOULD TELL PEOPLE ABOUT NORTH KOREA'S STUBBORNNESS AND SOPHISTRY
(Dong-a Ilbo, May 28, 2009, Page 27)

North Korea said yesterday in reference to the ROKG's full participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), "It has brought the Korean Peninsula to war," threatening to "counter any hostile action against (North Korea) with prompt and strong military strikes."

The ROKG's participation in the PSI came as a countermeasure against North Korea's second nuclear test and missile development. Unless the North uses our territorial waters to transport nuclear weapons, missiles and their parts, we will not stop North Korean vessels for cargo inspection. North Korea's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland even said, "There is nothing wrong

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with a nuclear state conducting a nuclear test, and it is very natural." However, Pyongyang's nuclear test is tantamount to a declaration of war against us.

The Panmunjeom Mission of the North Korean People's Army cited the Armistice Agreement as a ground for its military retaliation. It seems to point to Paragraph 15 of the Agreement, "This Armistice Agreement shall apply to all opposing naval forces, which naval forces...shall not engage in blockade of any kind of Korea." However, PSI activities do not involve total blockage of specific waters but only target vessels suspected of carrying banned items. The PSI, which has 95 members, does not target a specific country. Moreover, the PSI does not restrict the normal operation of civilian ships. Therefore, it is preposterous for North Korea to argue that the ROK's participation in PSI is a violation of the Korean War Armistice.

A military reaction by North Korea to (the ROK's) PSI activities would violate the Maritime Agreement reached between North Korea and the ROK in 2004. The Maritime Agreement allows North Korean and ROK civilian vessels to pass through each other's territorial waters in order to reduce sailing time. North Korean vessels sailing on a designated route with prior approval (from the ROK) are protected under this (Maritime) Agreement regardless of the ROK's participation in PSI. The ROK can take action, such as inspections, only when North Korean vessels are suspected of carrying weapons or (their) parts, or undermining peace, order and security.

This is not the first time North Korea has attempted to nullify the Armistice. We should be on high alert, however, since this time North Korea threatens immediate military retaliation through "action against action." (ROK) military authorities should be thoroughly prepared against any military provocations and clashes which could occur in the waters west of the peninsula and should brace themselves to take countermeasures. Also, the ROKG needs to properly explain to the public the exact nature of North Korea's absurd logics and deceptive arguments, and the ROK's logic against North Korean claims. The public, government and military can respond more adequately (to this critical situation) when they have a shared sense of security against North Korea.

FEATURES

NORTH KOREA THREATENS ROK OVER PSI ENTRY
(Dong-a Ilbo, May 28, 2009, Front Page)

By Reporters Shin Suk-ho and Yoon Sang-ho

North Korea stepped up its hostile rhetoric against South Korea yesterday, calling Seoul's full participation in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative a declaration of war.

"We will react militarily to any hostile act by South Korea," the North said. "The Korean War armistice has lost its binding power, so the Korean Peninsula is at war."

In a statement issued through the North's state-run Korean Central News Agency, the Panmunjeon Mission of the North Korean People's Army said, "We cannot guarantee the legal status of South Korea's five islands (Baeknyeong, Daechong, Socheong, Yeonpyeong and Udo) in waters northwest of our maritime borders and the safety of U.S. and South Korean naval and commercial vessels operating in neighboring waters."

Experts say this comment, along with the declaration to nullify the Northern Limit Line in the Yellow Sea in January, is a signal from the North that it is prepared for a military confrontation with the South.

Blasting the South for joining the U.S.-led initiative, the North said, "Any hostile act by South Korea, including a crackdown on and search of our vessels, will be deemed a violation of our republic's

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sovereignty and met with strong military attacks."

"Our military is no longer bound to the armistice," it said, adding, "If the armistice loses its binding power, the Korean Peninsula is legally at war. Accordingly, our revolutionary forces will carry out military action."

The North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland also issued a statement the same day, saying, "(The South) has declared war on us by brutally trampling on our dignity and autonomy," adding, "We will respond with measures corresponding to those taken in wartime."

South Korean President Lee Myung-bak learned of the North's reaction to South Korea's decision to join the initiative at a meeting with foreign affairs and security advisers. He ordered relevant ministries to react calmly, according to Presidential Spokesman Lee Dong-kwan.

A South Korean destroyer has been dispatched to the Yellow Sea to prepare for a possible military provocation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Seoul said, "We've prepared countermeasures based on various scenarios for North Korea's possible provocations near the Northern Limit Line, though we cannot disclose more details about them."

(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

MILITARY ON ALERT AFTER N. KOREAN THREATS
(Chosun Ilbo, May 28, 2009, Page 3)

By Military Affairs Reporter Yu Yong-won

The South Korean military is on alert after North Korea on Wednesday warned it cannot guarantee safe passage for South Korean and U.S. ships in the Yellow Sea and will no longer respect the armistice agreement. The saber rattling apparently comes in protest against South Korea's decision to join the Proliferation Security Initiative, a U.S.-led anti-proliferation regime.

The most likely place where North Korea could carry out provocations is in waters near the Northern Limit Line (NLL), the de facto maritime border in the Yellow Sea. The Panmunjeon mission of the

North Korean Army also hinted in a statement Wednesday at the possibility of provocations along the NLL near the five islands.

South Korean military authorities speculate that the North could fire surface-to-ship or ship-to-ship missiles or shells from a west coast artillery battery, send gunboats to clash with South Korean vessels, or send fighter jets to fly close to the NLL.

North Korea fired five short-range missiles from the east coast on Monday and Tuesday, four of which reportedly were surface-to-ship missiles, including the KN-01 with a range of 160 km. The North Korean military staged 19 firing exercises firing a total of 1,000 shells in waters near Daesup Island on the northern side of Yeonpyeong Island since early this year.

The South Korean military is most concerned about illegal fishing near the NLL by Chinese fishing boats. Currently, some 300 Chinese fishing boats are engaged in illegal fishing in waters off Yeonpyeong and Daechong islands near the NLL. The military speculates that more Chinese fishing boats will arrive, with about 2 more tons of fish expected to be caught than last year.

The North could also heighten tensions by sending fighter jets near the NLL or the demilitarized zone. The frequency of North Korean fighter drills above the west coast has increased six times over last year.

Minister of National Defense Lee Sang-hee said at a parliamentary hearing in February, "If North Korea launches a preemptive attack,

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we will strike military positions (where the missile or artillery attacks originate.)" This means that the ROK will not be hit unilaterally but it will clearly respond to any attack by the North.

Accordingly, since the North began ratcheting up tensions at the end of January, the ROK military has reportedly conducted precision bombing practice runs, involving F-15K fighter jets, targeting North Korea's ground-to-ship missile bases or coast batteries in the Yellow Sea, from which the North has attacked ROK vessels in emergencies. The ROK Navy plans to move a 3500-ton destroyer and a number of convoys, corvette and high-speed patrol craft forward near the NLL, and the ROK Marine Corps plans to deploy the K-9 self-propelled gun (with a maximum firing range of 40 km) to Baeknyeong-do and Yeonpyeong-do.

* We have compared the English version on the website with the Korean version and added the last two paragraphs to make them identical.

1N. KOREA'S NUKE TEST REVIVES DEFENSE DEBATES (Chosun Ilbo, May 28, 2009, Front Page)

By Reporter Yoon Jung-ho

North Korea's nuclear test has revived debate in the South about the handover of wartime operational control over the South Korean troops from the U.S. and nuclear armament.

At the request of Liberty Forward Party lawmaker Chough Soon-hyung, the Ministry of Legislation recently issued a formal statement saying the current procedure for the takeover of wartime operational control of South Korean troops from the U.S. "leaves room for unconstitutionality." The ministry partially accepted Chough's argument that it was against the Constitution for the previous government to push for the takeover, a matter that could have decisive effects on national security and require an additional budget of hundreds of trillions of won, without a review by the Cabinet and approval from the National Assembly.

At a meeting of senior government and ruling party officials on Wednesday, the ruling Grand National Party again asked the government to reconsider the takeover. During the Roh Moo-hyun Administration, Seoul and Washington agreed the South Korean

military would have exclusive control over its own troops, which in wartime is nominally still in U.S. hands, as of April 2012.

The GNP also reportedly asked the government to see if the issue can be raised at the upcoming Seoul-Washington summit in June.

Meanwhile, there are calls for South Korea to reconsider nuclear armament. GNP Chairman Park Hee-tae urged the government to find out how the U.S. will ensure a nuclear umbrella for the South. He called for South Korea to "make our own efforts to obtain enough deterrence against the nuclear weapons the North has already developed." In the same meeting, lawmaker Gong Sung-jin, a GNP Supreme Council member, said, "We should calmly review whether the inter-Korean declaration on nuclear-free Korean Peninsula is still effective." In an interview, LFP Spokesperson Park Sun-young called for "a plan to develop nuclear weapons for self-defense."

However, Democratic Party Spokesman Roh Young-min said in a commentary, "Arguments for nuclear sovereignty and a delay in the transfer of wartime operational control are raising tensions on the Korean Peninsula."

* We have compared the English version on the website with the Korean version and added the last paragraph to make them identical.

STEPHENS